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CARDINAL GIBBONS ON THE ARBITRATION TREATIES.*

I sincerely hope that the new arbitration treaties negotiated by our national government with Great Britain and France will be ratified by the Senate. They should receive the support of the whole country. It is of the utmost importance that civilized nations should bind themselves in advance to submit to arbitration all international questions which can be settled by the application of principles of law and equity, and I can see no reason why there should not be appointed joint commissions to investigate international controversies and determine whether particular questions are of such a character, so that each nation will be in honor bound to submit those issues to international arbitration rather than to resort to war. That idea represents the best spirit of the age. It has behind it the indorsement of the Christian world.

Among the many advantages of international arbitration, it seems to me to be a very serviceable breakwater against war, because its deliberate and orderly procedure gives a nation's blood time to cool. Formerly it was only necessary to slap the face of a foreign minister, and that was considered a sufficient *casus belli*. Think of a condition in which a personal affront like that was regarded as a justification for the slaughter of multitudes!

Duels between individuals were once frequent in this country. Even in the United States Senate and the House of Representatives an insult would be followed by armed combat. The nation, however, has grown wiser and better, and the duel has been relegated to the museum of extinct social monstrosities. I do not see why the same influence that led to the suppression of duels between individuals should not produce a like result in the affairs of nations, which are simply aggregations of individuals. General international arbitration treaties seem to me to be the surest and quickest means through which the universal peace may be effected, or at least approached.

When we consider the evils of war, our eyes are directed almost exclusively to the combatants themselves. We have no thoughts for the non-combatants. The truth is that the most frightful sufferings of war are borne by the wives and children of those who fight

*From an interview published November 20.

1911

in the field. The bitter agony of their waiting and anxiety is far worse than the mere physical hardships and sufferings of the armed men. A wound to the loved one in battle strikes more cruelly those who have to wait at home. Physical suffering usually dissipates the fear of death. Men can suffer and die bravely in the excitement of war; but harder, much harder, to bear is the moral agony of those who must wait, without power to help their dear ones in danger.

The financial side of war, too, has its strong aspect. It is proper that the world at large should have something to say about quarrels between particular nations. The commerce of nations is now so involved and related that war between two nations is an interference with all nations. For instance, I have $20,000 invested in German securities. Germany goes to war, and I must suffer, although I am an American citizen. International efforts to prevent war rest upon equitable as well as humanitarian rights. The result of war is not only a loss of life, but also a partial paralysis of trade.

Men will not fight if they have time to grow cool. Nations will not fight if they have time to think. The penalties and degradations of war are too great, the agonies of the weak and helpless, the aged and other non-combatants, are too horrible, the waste of wealth, the destruction of industry and commerce, are too vast to be endured when there is a way to peace. I am in favor of the general arbitration treaty principle, and I indorse the idea of the new treaties with Great Britain and France because I believe that questions which might otherwise result in war should be first taken away from the influence of party politics and considered seriously in the calm, neutral air of some impartial tribunal, whose findings must at least morally bind the contending nations to submit to international arbitration all questions which may be found solvable according to principles of law or equity. The world's greatest need is a breakwater against temporary passions. War is too horrible to be entered upon in cold blood and with deliberation when there is any other possible way to settle the question in dispute.

I think that one of the things that will redound most to the glory of our country in the future will be its enthusiastic devotion to the movement for international peace. Devotedness to this noble purpose alone will stamp the United States as a truly Christian country, for universal peace among men—the brotherhood of men—is essentially Christian. Before the advent of Christianity, war was the rule, peace the exception.

In spite of the fact that the divinely appointed spokesman of Christianity eloquently pleaded for universal peace among all men and all nations, and that in defiance of this constant appeal wars were waged, still it must be admitted that they occurred less fre-

quently than before, and were conducted with less cruelty and less inhumanity. The reasons for this, if time permitted, could be clearly stated. However, it would be unjust to infer from this fact that Christianity has failed in her mission of peace to the nations. It should be borne in mind that the Christian religion enforces her humane precepts not by the sword, but by moral and religious sanctions, and that, in contending for peace, she has to struggle against the most formidable of earthly forces and the most imperious of human passions.

It is a gratifying fact that with a population of about a hundred millions the army of the United States does not exceed 40,000 men, who are scattered for the most part along the frontiers of the country. This force, while sufficiently strong to preserve our domestic peace, is too insignificant to excite the fear or provoke the jealousy of our neighbors. Our best security lies in the supremacy of the law, in the loyalty of our citizens, in their strong attachment to our free institutions, and in abstention from entangling alliances.

That the cause of international peace is gaining ground is evident from the fact that war is no longer precipitated among Christian nations, as in former times, at the whim of the sovereign, but the voice of the people is heard through their representatives and the press, at least in constitutional governments. Commercial interests and fraternal and social relations between the nations of the earth are now becoming so intertwined that one country can hardly inflict an injury on another without having the blow recoil upon itself.

In well-ordered society the disputes of individuals are settled, not by recourse to a duel, but to the law. Would it not be a blessing to humanity if national controversies were composed on the same principles, and that the just cause of a nation should be vindicated by a court of arbitration rather than by an appeal to arms? Then to rulers, as well as to private litigants, could be applied the words: "Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just." And this amicable system, while protecting the rights of the weak, would not humiliate or wound the national pride of the strong, since it does not attempt to trench on the sovereignty or autonomy of any power.

Christianity has not only diminished the number, but has mitigated the horrors of war. In pagan times the conqueror rarely showed mercy to the conquered. *Vae victis!*—Woe to the vanquished!—was his usual motto. The cities were laid waste. The wives and daughters of the subdued nation became the prey of the victorious soldier. The defeated kings and generals were obliged to grace the triumph of the conqueror. They were led away in chains and doomed to hopeless captivity.

Contrast the treatment of the Jews under Titus with the conduct

of General Grant toward the conquered Confederate States. Both generals were engaged in a civil war. Judea was as much an integral part of the Roman Empire as the Southern States were of the Federal Union. Its inhabitants appealed to the clemency of Titus as forcibly as the vanquished States appealed to the magnanimity of the Northern general. Yet Grant in allowing the Southern leader, with his officers and men, to return home after the surrender at Appomattox Court House, was not particularly praised for his humanity.

Imagine General Lee with his surrendered army led in chains through the streets of Washington, the victorious troops bearing aloft the confiscated treasures of Southern homes and sanctuaries, and the victims compelled to erect a public monument to their own shame.

Let us cherish the hope that the day is not far off when the reign of the Prince of Peace will be firmly established on the earth, when the spirit of the gospel will so far sway the minds and hearts of rulers that standing armies will yield to permanent courts of arbitration, that contests will be carried on in the council chambers instead of the battlefield, and decided by the pen instead of the sword.

If we do not insist that before men go to war they shall do everything in their power to settle their dispute by arbitration, then might becomes right.

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